



ARIZONA EDUCATOR PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENTS™



STUDY GUIDE

27 Special Education: Learning Disability

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PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE AEPA™ AND TEST PREPARATION

Part 1 of this study guide is contained in a separate PDF file. Click the link below to view or print this section:

[General Information About the AEPA and Test Preparation](#)



PART 2: FIELD-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Field 27: Special Education: Learning Disability

INTRODUCTION

This section includes a list of the test objectives, practice questions, and an answer key for the selected-response questions.

Test objectives. As noted earlier, the test objectives are broad, conceptual statements that reflect the knowledge, skills, and understanding an entry-level educator needs to practice effectively in Arizona schools. The list of test objectives for each test field is the *only* source of information about what a specific test will cover and therefore should be studied carefully.

Practice questions. The practice selected-response questions and practice performance assignments included in this section are designed to give you an introduction to the nature of the questions included in the AEPA tests. The practice questions represent the various types of questions you may expect to see on an actual test; however, they are *not* designed to provide diagnostic information to help you identify specific areas of individual strengths and weaknesses or to predict your performance on the test as a whole.

When you answer the practice questions, you may wish to use the sample answer sheet and sample Written Response Booklet provided in Part 1 to acquaint yourself with these materials. Use the answer key located after the practice questions to check your answers. Sample responses are provided immediately following each written performance assignment. The sample responses in this guide are for illustrative purposes only. Your written response should be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work.

To help you identify how the test objectives are measured, the objective statement to which the question corresponds is listed in the answer key. When you are finished with the practice questions, you may wish to go back and review the entire list of test objectives and descriptive statements for your test field.

TEST OBJECTIVES

Field 27: Special Education: Learning Disability

SUBAREAS:

1. Understanding Students with Specific Learning Disabilities
2. Assessing Students and Developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
3. Promoting Student Development and Learning
4. Working in a Collaborative Learning Community

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

0001 Understand types and characteristics of learning disabilities and their developmental significance.

For example: types and characteristics of specific learning disabilities; differences between learning disabilities and other types of impairments; and the influence of learning disabilities on psychomotor, cognitive, social, emotional, and language development.

0002 Understand types and characteristics of receptive and expressive language disorders associated with learning disabilities.

For example: types and characteristics of receptive language disorders, expressive language disorders, and integrative language disorders; and the implications of various types of language disorders for student learning.

0003 Understand types and characteristics of perceptual and memory disorders associated with learning disabilities.

For example: disorders in discrimination, visual-motor tasks, perceptual speed, and sequencing; perseveration; difficulties in organizing, classifying, storing, retrieving, and interpreting information; difficulties with long- and short-term memory, recognition, and recall; and the implications of various types of perceptual and memory disorders for student learning.

0004 Understand types and characteristics of thinking disorders associated with learning disabilities.

For example: difficulties with concept formation and problem solving; difficulties in making judgments, comparisons, calculations, and decisions; difficulties in metacognition; and the implications of various types of thinking disorders for student learning.

0005 Understand types and characteristics of behavioral, social, and emotional disorders associated with learning disabilities.

For example: attention deficits; types and characteristics of behavioral, social, and emotional disorders associated with learning disabilities; and the implications of various types of behavioral, social, and emotional disorders for student learning.

ASSESSING STUDENTS AND DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPs)

0006 Understand types and characteristics of assessment instruments and methods.

For example: types, characteristics, and methods of formal and informal assessment; principles and procedures for creating, evaluating, selecting, and using assessment instruments and methods, including those used in prereferral situations; and advantages, disadvantages, and limitations of various assessment instruments and methods.

0007 Understand procedures for evaluating and identifying students with learning disabilities.

For example: components of a full and individual evaluation for determining eligibility for special education programs and related services; principles and procedures for screening and diagnosing students with learning disabilities; basic methods of assessing students' behavior and communication needs and need for assistive technology; roles and functions of members of the multidisciplinary evaluation team; procedural requirements for conducting a full and individual evaluation; and ways in which cultural diversity and linguistic differences may affect evaluation and placement decisions in special education.

0008 Understand the uses of ongoing assessment in the education of students with learning disabilities.

For example: benefits and uses of ongoing assessment; procedures for conducting ongoing assessment; methods for identifying learning styles; and the interpretation of ongoing assessment data to evaluate students' academic progress, determine student strengths and needs, and revise IEPs.

0009 Understand procedures for developing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with learning disabilities.

For example: roles and functions of members of the individualized educational planning (IEP) team; information that must be specified in an IEP; uses of assessment data and Arizona student standards in developing a student's IEP; characteristics of IEP objectives/benchmarks and goals; procedures and requirements for creating and maintaining records; and procedures for evaluating progress toward IEP objectives/benchmarks and goals, requirements for reviewing and revising an IEP, and the rights of students, parents, and guardians in relation to IEPs.

0010 Understand options for program and service delivery for students with learning disabilities.

For example: roles of ancillary and related service personnel who may be involved in educational programs for students with learning disabilities; program options for students with learning disabilities; principles and procedures for inclusion of students with learning disabilities; types and characteristics of community-based services; and the application of placement options in the continuum of services in the education of students with learning disabilities.

PROMOTING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

0011 Understand principles for creating a positive and productive learning environment for all students, including classroom management practices.

For example: ways in which learning disabilities may affect students' progress in the general education curriculum; factors in the learning environment that affect students' attitudes toward learning; strategies for modifying learning environments to address diverse student needs, especially those related to learning disabilities; strategies for problem behavior prevention/intervention; and individual and group management strategies and intervention techniques for achieving instructional management goals (e.g., maintaining standards of behavior, maximizing time on task).

0012 Understand instructional approaches used with students with learning disabilities.

For example: techniques and principles of the learning strategies approach to instruction; characteristics of linguistic, cognitive, metacognitive, and multisensory approaches to instruction; components of various instructional approaches (e.g., cognitive-task interaction, task-process training); and applications of various instructional approaches in given situations.

0013 Understand approaches and techniques for individualizing instruction and promoting independent learning in students with learning disabilities.

For example: strategies for individualizing instruction based on student needs and strengths (e.g., adapting instructional approaches to accommodate preferred learning styles, making use of appropriate materials and technologies); and strategies for promoting students' independent learning (e.g., helping students recognize and make use of tools, resources, and learning strategies that work for them; designing assignments based on student interests; using grouping practices to enhance learning).

0014 Understand approaches and techniques used to improve students' receptive language skills.

For example: types and characteristics of oral receptive language difficulties associated with learning disabilities; the sequence of acquisition of receptive language skills; principles of and methods for improving students' listening and oral comprehension skills; and strategies for developing students' skill in interpreting nonverbal communication and processing orally communicated information.

0015 Understand emergent literacy and techniques for promoting the emergence of literacy in students with learning disabilities.

For example: skills and concepts associated with the emergence of literacy (e.g., phonemic awareness, concepts about print, sound-symbol relationships); principles of and methods for teaching prereading skills and phonological awareness to students with learning disabilities; and practices that promote students' early reading success.

0016 Understand approaches and techniques for improving students' reading skills.

For example: types and characteristics of reading difficulties associated with learning disabilities; strategies and techniques for developing students' decoding, word recognition, and reading comprehension skills; various approaches to reading instruction (e.g., skills-based, whole-language, and combined approaches); and practices that promote students' enjoyment of reading.

0017 Understand approaches and techniques for improving students' oral expression.

For example: types and characteristics of expressive language difficulties associated with learning disabilities; the sequence of acquisition of expressive language skills; principles of and methods for improving students' skills in phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, pragmatics, and fluency; and strategies for promoting effective oral communication.

0018 Understand approaches and techniques for improving students' written expression.

For example: types and characteristics of written language difficulties associated with learning disabilities; the sequence of skills development in written expression; principles of and methods for improving students' handwriting, spelling, and composition skills; and strategies for promoting effective written communication.

0019 Understand approaches and techniques used in math instruction for students with learning disabilities.

For example: types and characteristics of mathematical reasoning and calculation difficulties associated with learning disabilities; the sequence of skills development in mathematics; and principles of and methods for improving students' computation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

0020 Understand approaches and techniques for improving students' personal, social, and functional skills and facilitating transitions.

For example: principles and techniques for increasing students' self-confidence, independence, decision making, responsibility, and personal ownership of tasks and goals; self-management strategies; strategies for managing personal interactions, establishing positive relationships, working cooperatively with peers and others, and perceiving expectations in various social situations; strategies for teaching functional skills in the major domains (i.e., domestic, recreation/leisure, community, and employment); and techniques for helping students make transitions during their school years (e.g., from one grade level or teacher to another, from one school to another).

0021 Understand behavior management approaches.

For example: types and characteristics of behavior management approaches; procedures for developing and implementing behavior management approaches; the application of behavior management techniques in given situations; principles of and strategies for coordinating behavior management among persons involved in the implementation of IEPs; and ways of involving family members in the development and implementation of individual behavior management approaches.

0022 Understand techniques for promoting career awareness and self-advocacy and initiating transition services for students with learning disabilities.

For example: techniques and settings for promoting career and vocational awareness, exploration, and preparation; procedures and legal requirements for developing Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs); the provision of appropriate transition services in given situations (e.g., school to work, school to post-secondary education, school to adult living); and strategies for promoting students' ability to advocate for themselves and obtain assistance as necessary (e.g., from family, government agencies, consumer organizations, and advocacy groups).

WORKING IN A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY

0023 Understand how to establish partnerships with other members of the school community to enhance learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities.

For example: consultation and collaboration strategies for working with other school staff and support service providers, including general education teachers, to solve problems and promote student achievement; collaborative strategies and practices for inclusion; strategies and practices for integrating services (e.g., speech, occupational, physical) into students' daily routines; and procedures for coordinating materials, equipment, and services for students in various educational contexts.

0024 Understand how to promote strong school-home relationships.

For example: strategies for establishing and maintaining communication with families, including families whose first language is other than English; ways to recognize and overcome barriers to communication with families; strategies for collaborating with families in the planning and implementation of their children's education; and methods of providing information, training, support, counseling, and referrals to families whose children have learning disabilities.

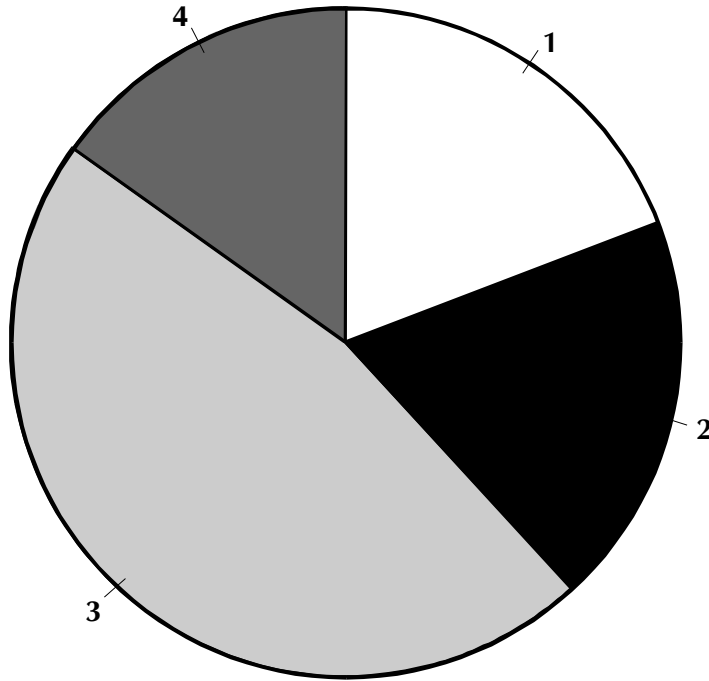
0025 Understand how to encourage school-community interactions that enhance learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities.

For example: awareness of agencies and services that can help meet the needs of students with learning disabilities; sensitivity to various cultural perspectives within the community; strategies for working with community institutions to facilitate successful student transitions, including locating meaningful employment and community living options from non-school sources; securing advocacy, educational, transitional, and residential services through legal, governmental, consumer, community, and advocacy agencies; and strategies for engaging community support for the special education program.

0026 Understand the history and philosophy of special education, key issues and trends, roles and responsibilities, and legal and ethical issues relevant to special education.

For example: the historical and philosophical foundations of special education; ways in which approaches to special education have changed over time; legal and ethical issues in special education (e.g., confidentiality, personal involvement with students and families, student discipline); roles and responsibilities (including professional development) of teachers of students with special needs; mediation techniques; and application of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other special education related laws (e.g., Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]), regulations, and guidelines (e.g., regarding referral, evaluation, eligibility, equity, program development, due process).

DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED-RESPONSE ITEMS ON THE TEST FORM



Subarea	Approximate Percentage of Selected-Response Items on Test Form
1. Understanding Students with Specific Learning Disabilities	19%
2. Assessing Students and Developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)	19%
3. Promoting Student Development and Learning	46%
4. Working in a Collaborative Learning Community	16%

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Field 27: Special Education: Learning Disability

1. A student who has a learning disability that involves problems with visual-motor coordination is most likely to have difficulty with which of the following classroom activities?
 - A. distinguishing the shapes of objects
 - B. focusing on the letters of a word
 - C. recalling material presented visually
 - D. learning to form letters correctly

2. A student exhibits a receptive language deficit. This deficit would likely indicate a learning disability if the student's problems were attributed primarily to:
 - A. a severe deficit in auditory acuity.
 - B. limited exposure to appropriate speech and language models.
 - C. generalized delays in cognitive development.
 - D. specific deficits in auditory memory and blending.

3. A student with a learning disability who makes errors such as reading *mail* for *nail* and *sap* for *sad* probably has difficulty in the area of:
 - A. auditory sequencing.
 - B. visual discrimination.
 - C. visual closure.
 - D. auditory blending.

4. Julia obtained raw scores of 95 and 75, respectively, on reading and listening tests. To determine in which field Julia performed better with respect to other students in her class, what additional information would her special education teacher need to know?
 - A. the total number of items on each test
 - B. the ratio between the average class reading score and the average class listening score
 - C. the percentage of items Julia answered correctly on each test
 - D. where Julia's scores fall in the class distribution for the tests

5. Before a student can be accurately diagnosed as having a learning disability, assessment data should indicate that:
- A. there is a severe discrepancy between the student's achievement and intellectual potential in at least one major area of learning.
 - B. the student's potential for learning has been significantly and negatively affected primarily by environmental or economic disadvantage.
 - C. a neurological impairment is the cause of a significant discrepancy between the student's measured learning performance and that of same-age peers.
 - D. the long-term prognosis for independence and success in the student's social and vocational endeavors is poor.
6. A teacher has determined that an elementary student who has adequate visual and auditory perception exhibits a significant weakness in visual-motor integration. To address this weakness, the teacher should most likely focus on developing individualized instruction and adaptations for this student in which of the following areas?
- A. listening comprehension
 - B. handwriting and composition
 - C. vocabulary development
 - D. content-area reading
7. Which of the following is an example of a child's confusion in interpreting contextual meaning versus auditory meaning?
- A. A child ceases activity upon hearing the command "no" or seeing the gesture meaning "stop" made by the teacher.
 - B. A teacher extends her hand while saying "take my hand" and the child responds by giving the teacher a toy that is in the child's hand.
 - C. A child responds with the correct gestures to verbalizations of "up" or "bye" but requires assistance in responding to more complex verbal cues.
 - D. A teacher names or describes a common object and the child points to or otherwise indicates the object.
8. Which of the following should be introduced *last* when teaching skills and concepts related to mathematical operations involving fractions to students with learning disabilities?
- A. subtracting fractions with like denominators
 - B. finding equivalent forms of fractions
 - C. adding fractions with different denominators
 - D. converting fractions to mixed numerals

9. Which of the following is the first step one should take in developing a behavior management plan for a highly distractible individual who has a learning disability?
- A. collect data to determine whether there is a casual relationship between the individual's learning disability and his or her distractibility
 - B. identify reinforcers for increasing attending behaviors
 - C. modify the environment to increase the frequency and duration of attending behaviors
 - D. define appropriate attending behaviors in operational terms
10. A special education teacher has found several specific techniques useful in developing the communication skills of an adolescent student, and the student's parents wish to reinforce these techniques at home. Which of the following approaches would be most appropriate and effective for coordinating the teacher's and parents' efforts?
- A. Provide the parents with a detailed written description of the techniques that have proven effective at school.
 - B. Send weekly reports to the parents to communicate any progress the student may be making as a result of the techniques.
 - C. Demonstrate the techniques to the parents and then provide the student with a home-school notebook for daily use by the parents and teacher.
 - D. Hold parent-teacher conferences on an as-needed basis and encourage parents to call if they have any concerns or questions.

11. The majority of the students and the teacher in a particular elementary classroom belong to the ethnic group most prevalent in the community. In this class, how can the teacher best help encourage academic curiosity and achievement among students who belong to different ethnic groups?
- A. choose curriculum materials that emphasize one primary mode of learning for all students in the class
 - B. ignore differences in students' cultural backgrounds and strive to develop in students a single cultural identity
 - C. select curriculum materials that include content about the history and culture of the various ethnic groups in the class
 - D. establish high academic standards to which all students will be held, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds
12. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a student should be considered learning disabled if his or her academic problems are due primarily to:
- A. motor handicaps.
 - B. mental retardation.
 - C. perceptual handicaps.
 - D. behavioral disorders.

Below are the directions for the Special Education: Learning Disability performance assignment.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE PERFORMANCE ASSIGNMENT

This section of the test consists of a performance assignment. **The assignment can be found on the next page.** You are asked to prepare a written response of approximately 2–3 pages on the assigned topic. You should use your time to plan, write, review, and edit your response for the assignment.

Read the assignment carefully before you begin to work. Think about how you will organize your response. You may use any blank space in this test booklet to make notes, write an outline, or otherwise prepare your response. **However, your score will be based solely on the version of your response written in Written Response Booklet B.**

As a whole, your response must demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge and skills of the field. In your response to the assignment, you are expected to demonstrate the depth of your understanding of the content area through your ability to apply your knowledge and skills rather than merely to recite factual information.

Your response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

- **PURPOSE:** the extent to which the response achieves the purpose of the assignment
- **SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE:** accuracy and appropriateness in the application of subject matter knowledge
- **SUPPORT:** quality and relevance of supporting details
- **RATIONALE:** soundness of argument and degree of understanding of the subject matter

The performance assignment is intended to assess subject knowledge content and skills, not writing ability. However, your response must be communicated clearly enough to permit scorers to make a valid evaluation of your response according to the criteria listed above. Your response should be written for an audience of educators in this field. The final version of your response should conform to the conventions of edited American English. This should be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work.

Be sure to write about the assigned topic. Please write legibly. You may not use any reference materials during the test. Remember to review your work and make any changes you think will improve your response.

Below is the scoring scale for the Special Education: Learning Disability performance assignment.

SUBJECT TESTS—PERFORMANCE ASSIGNMENT SCORING SCALE

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p>The "4" response reflects a thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the assignment is fully achieved. • There is a substantial, accurate, and appropriate application of subject matter knowledge. • The supporting evidence is sound; there are high-quality, relevant examples. • The response reflects an ably reasoned, comprehensive understanding of the topic.
3	<p>The "3" response reflects an adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the assignment is largely achieved. • There is a generally accurate and appropriate application of subject matter knowledge. • The supporting evidence is adequate; there are some acceptable, relevant examples. • The response reflects an adequately reasoned understanding of the topic.
2	<p>The "2" response reflects a limited knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the assignment is partially achieved. • There is a limited, possibly inaccurate or inappropriate, application of subject matter knowledge. • The supporting evidence is limited; there are few relevant examples. • The response reflects a limited, poorly reasoned understanding of the topic.
1	<p>The "1" response reflects a weak knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the assignment is not achieved. • There is little or no appropriate or accurate application of subject matter knowledge. • The supporting evidence, if present, is weak; there are few or no relevant examples. • The response reflects little or no reasoning about or understanding of the topic.
U	<p>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment.</p>
B	<p>There is no response to the assignment.</p>

Practice Performance Assignment

13. **Read the information below; then complete the exercise that follows.**

A general education teacher asks a special education teacher for advice about a student in her class with a specific learning disability who is extremely distractible and has a hard time focusing on his schoolwork in class.

Using your knowledge of students with specific learning disabilities and ways to promote effective learning, write an essay in which you:

- describe one effective technique that the special education teacher could use to gain further information about the problem identified by the general education teacher;
- discuss two strategies that would help the student learn to manage his own behavior more effectively; and
- explain why the strategies you have suggested would be effective.

Sample Performance Assignment Response: Score Point 4

I, as the special education teacher, would make arrangements with the classroom teacher to observe in her classroom. I might visit the classroom several times and just casually stroll around talking to various kids and asking them about what they're doing, and not pay any more attention to the targeted student than to anyone else. After the students had gotten used to me being around, I'd start trying to observe the targeted student more closely, but not letting him know I was especially interested in him, because I would want to see him acting as naturally as possible. I would also try to come in at different times during the day, when the kids were involved in different types of activities (seat work, small group work, class discussions) to see if the student's behavior changed depending on what type of activity or time of day it was. I would then discuss my observations with the classroom teacher to get her feedback and validate the accuracy of my observations. Once I had a clearer picture of the situation, I would work with the classroom teacher about ways to help the student spend more time on-task. I might suggest environmental changes the teacher could make to minimize distractions. I would also try to help the student learn to manage his own behavior.

To begin helping the student manage his own behavior better, I would meet with him and the teacher to talk about it. I would try to help him understand why he needs to learn to concentrate better, and I would ask him if he had any ideas about what could help him pay more attention to his work. I would encourage him to think of things he could do to stay on-task more, especially when the work seems hard or boring. I would also point out some of the things I had observed when I watched him in his classroom, and I would help him brainstorm ways to work more steadily and productively. For example, maybe some of what the teacher calls "distractibility" is really a lack of organization and he ends up wasting a lot of time sharpening his pencils, finding his book, looking for a clean piece of paper to work on, etc. I would help him think of ways to organize his materials so he could get to work quickly. I would try to make him conscious of his own behavior and to help him recognize that he can make changes to how he works.

Another strategy that could be successful with an older student is to help him create a checklist of the steps he needs to take to do a particular assignment or type of assignment. He can check off each step as he completes it. This will help him stay on task by showing him what he has done already and reminding him of what needs to be done next.

Helping him become conscious of his own behavior is a good first step in helping him control it better. Providing him with strategies for managing his behavior would be motivational to him because it would help him feel in control. Setting up the checklist system will provide him with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, rewards that will motivate him to "keep up the good work."

ANSWER KEY

Field 27: Special Education: Learning Disability

Question Number	Correct Response	Objective
1.	D	Understand types and characteristics of learning disabilities and their developmental significance.
2.	D	Understand types and characteristics of receptive and expressive language disorders associated with learning disabilities.
3.	B	Understand types and characteristics of perceptual and memory disorders associated with learning disabilities.
4.	D	Understand types and characteristics of assessment instruments and methods.
5.	A	Understand procedures for evaluating and identifying students with learning disabilities.
6.	B	Understand instructional approaches used with students with learning disabilities.
7.	B	Understand approaches and techniques used to improve students' receptive language skills.
8.	C	Understand approaches and techniques used in math instruction for students with learning disabilities.
9.	D	Understand behavior management approaches.
10.	C	Understand how to promote strong school-home relationships.
11.	D	Understand principles for creating a positive and productive learning environment for all students, including classroom management practices.
12.	C	Understand the history and philosophy of special education, key issues and trends, roles and responsibilities, and legal and ethical issues relevant to special education.